

NINETY-FOURTH DAY

Friday, 29 March 1946

Morning Session

THE PRESIDENT: Before the examination of the Defendant [Von Ribbentrop](#) goes on, the Tribunal desires me to draw the attention of Dr. Horn and of the Defendant Von Ribbentrop to what the Tribunal has said during the last few days.

In the first place, the Tribunal said this: The Tribunal has allowed the Defendant Goering, who has given the evidence first of the defendants and who has proclaimed himself to be responsible as the second leader of Nazi Germany, to give his evidence without any interruption whatever, and he has covered the whole history of the Nazi regime from its inception to the defeat of Germany. The Tribunal does not propose to allow any of the other defendants to go over the same ground in their evidence except insofar as is necessary for their own defense.

Secondly, the Tribunal ruled that evidence as to the injustice of the [Versailles Treaty](#) or whether it was made under duress is inadmissible.

Thirdly, though this is not an order of the Tribunal, I must point out that the Tribunal has been informed on many occasions of the view of the defendants and some of their witnesses that the Treaty of Versailles was unjust and therefore any evidence upon that point, apart from its being inadmissible, is cumulative, and, the Tribunal will not hear it for that reason.

And lastly, the Tribunal wishes me to point out to Dr. Horn that it is the duty of counsel to examine their witnesses and not to leave them simply to make speeches, and if they are giving evidence which counsel knows is inadmissible according to the rulings of the Tribunal it is the duty of counsel to stop the witness. That is all.

Dr. Seidl, if you are going to refer to Gaus' affidavit the Tribunal will not deal with that matter now, it will be dealt with after the Defendant Von Ribbentrop has given evidence.

DR. SEIDL: Mr. President, I agreed with Dr. Horn, Counsel for the Defendant Ribbentrop ...

THE PRESIDENT: Dr. Seidl, I do not care whether you spoke to Dr. Horn or not or what arrangement you may have made with

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Dr. Horn; it is not convenient for the Tribunal to hear Dr. Gaus evidence at the present moment; they want to go on with Ribbentrop's evidence.

[Turning to the defendant.]

DR. HORN: Yesterday at the end you were speaking about your political impressions in England and France. In connection with that I should like to put the following question: Did you make efforts to tell Hitler of your views on French and British politics at that time?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, after 30 January 1933 I saw Hitler repeatedly and of course told him about the impressions which I gathered on my frequent travels, particularly to England and France.

DR. HORN: What was Hitler's attitude toward France and England at that time?

VON RIBBENTROP: Hitler's attitude was as follows: He saw in France an enemy of Germany because of the entire policy which France had pursued with regard to Germany since the end of World War I, and especially because of the position which she took on questions of equality of rights. This attitude of Hitler's found expression at the time in his book *Mein Kampf*.

I knew France well, since for a number of years I had had connections there. At that time I told the Fuehrer a great deal about France. It interested him, and I noticed that he showed an increasing interest in French matters in the year 1933. Then I brought him together with a number of Frenchmen, and I believe some of these visits, and perhaps also some of my descriptions of the attitude taken by many Frenchmen, and all of French culture ...

DR. HORN: What Frenchmen were they?

VON RIBBENTROP: There were a number of French economists, there were journalists and also some politicians. These reports interested the Fuehrer, and gradually he got the impression that there were, after all, men in France who were not averse to the idea of an understanding with Germany.

Above all I acquainted the Fuehrer with an argument which sprang from my deepest conviction and my years of experience. It was a great wish of the Fuehrer, as is well known, to come to a definitive friendship and agreement with England. At first the Fuehrer treated this idea as something apart from Franco-German politics. I believe that at that time I succeeded in convincing the Fuehrer that an understanding with England would be possible only by way of an understanding with France as well. That made, as I still remember very clearly from some of our conversations, a strong impression on him. He told me then that I should continue

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this purely personal course of mine for bringing about an understanding between Germany and France and that I should continue to report to him about these things.

DIL HORN: Then you became Hitler's foreign political advisor, not the Party advisor? How was that?

VON RIBBENTROP: I have already said that I reported to Hitler about my travel experiences. These impressions which I brought from England and France were of interest to him, and, without any special conferences or discussions being arranged, I was often received by Hitler. I spoke with him repeatedly

and in that way it came about of itself that, apart from the official channels, he acknowledged my co-operation and my advice as to what I had seen and heard in foreign countries.

Of course, he was particularly interested in all questions concerning England. I told him about public opinion and personalities and introduced to him, besides Frenchmen, a number of Englishmen with whom he could exchange ideas outside the official channels, something which he loved to do.

DR. HORN: In what did your personal co-operation in the efforts made by Hitler to come to an agreement with France in the years 1933 to 1935 consist?

VON RIBBENTROP: At that time the solution of the Saar question was one of the first problems up for discussion. I tried through my own private channels to make it clear to the French in Paris that a reasonable and quiet solution of the Saar question in the spirit of the plebiscite, as laid down in the Versailles Treaty, would be a good omen for the relations between the two countries. I spoke with a number of people during those years in Paris and also made the first contact with members of the French Cabinet. I might mention that I had conversations with the then French President Dournergue, with the Foreign Minister Barthou, who was later assassinated, with M. Laval, and especially with M. Daladier.

I remember that in connection with the Saar question in particular I met with considerable understanding on the part of the latter. Then somewhat later I noticed during the visits of Frenchmen to Hitler that it was always mentioned, "Yes, but there is *Mein Kampf* and your policy toward France is contained in that book." I tried to get the Fuehrer to bring out an official revision of this passage of *Mein Kampf*. The Fuehrer said, however -- and I remember the exact words -- that he was determined through his policy, as put into practice, to prove to the world that he had changed his view in this respect: Things once written down could not be changed, they were a historical fact, and his former attitude

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toward France had been caused by France's attitude toward Germany at that time. But one could now turn over a new leaf in the history of the two countries.

Then I asked Adolf Hitler to receive a French journalist, in order that possibly by a public statement this revision of the view expressed in his book *Mein Kampf* could be made known to the world.

He agreed to this and then received a French journalist and gave him an interview in 1933. I do not recall the exact date. I believe this article appeared in *Le Matin* and created a great deal of excitement. I was very glad, for thereby a large step toward an understanding with France had been taken. Then I contemplated what could further be done and how, from this simple public article, one could work up to a direct contact between French and German statesmen.

DR. HORN: At that time were you not contemplating the means for bringing Hitler and Daladier together? What practical efforts did you make?

VON RIBBENTROP: I was just going to come to that. At that time Daladier was the French Premier. I had several conversations with him and suggested to him that he meet Adolf Hitler so that quite frankly, man to man, they could carry on a discussion and see whether Franco-German relations could not be put on an entirely new basis. M. Daladier was quite taken by this idea. I reported this to Hitler and Hitler was ready to meet M. Daladier.

The meeting place was to be in the German Odenwald and was already agreed upon. I went to Paris to make the last arrangements with Daladier.

MR. DODD: If Your Honor pleases, I am reluctant to interfere in any respect with this examination of this defendant, but my colleagues and I feel that this particular part of the examination is quite immaterial and in any event much too detailed and that we will never get along here. If counsel would abide by the instruction of the Court given this morning, we could move along much more directly and much more quickly.

THE PRESIDENT: Dr. Horn, the Tribunal thinks that the objection is really well founded. The defendant is dealing with a period between 1933 and 1935 and the efforts which he made for good relations with France. Well now, that is very remote from any question which we have to decide in this case, and therefore to deal with it in this detail seems to the Tribunal a waste of time.

DR. HORN: Then I will put other questions, which concern his direct co-operation.

What caused Hitler to appoint you Plenipotentiary for Disarmament?

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VON RIBBENTROP: I believe I was appointed Commissioner for Disarmament in the year -- in March or April. The reason was as follows:

Hitler was of the opinion that there should be equality of armament. He believed that this would be possible only through negotiations with France and England. That was also my point of view. Because of my efforts to establish good relations between Germany and England, since this was the earnest wish of the Fuehrer, I was at that time in London and there was able to make contacts with men influential in English politics.

It was mainly the contact with Lord Baldwin. I spoke to Lord Baldwin and the then Prime Minister, Macdonald, about the German desire for equality and found that these ministers had an open ear. As the result of a long conversation which I had with the Lord Chancellor of that time, the present Lord Baldwin -- the latter, I believe on 1 December 1933, made a speech in the House of Commons, in which he pointed out that one should meet Germany, halfway. Armament equality had been promised and therefore it would have to be reached somehow. For this purpose there were three possibilities: One would be, that Germany arm up to the level of the other powers, and that was not desired; the second possibility, that the others would disarm to the level of Germany, and that could not be carried out; and therefore one would have to meet halfway and permit Germany a limited rearmament and the other

countries for their part would have to disarm. Adolf Hitler was very happy then about this attitude, for he considered it a practicable way of carrying through equality for Germany. Unfortunately it was not at all possible in the ensuing course of events to put into practice these good and reasonable ideas and statements made by Baldwin. Adolf Hitler therefore took the view that within the system now prevailing in the world it was apparently impossible to attain, by means of negotiations, armament equality -- equality of rights -- for Germany.

THE PRESIDENT: Wait. The interpreter isn't hearing you clearly. Could you put the microphone a little bit more in front of you? And would you repeat the last few sentences you said?

VON RIBBENTROP: Adolf Hitler saw that unfortunately, within the international system prevailing at that time, the good ideas of Lord Baldwin could not be carried out by means of negotiations.

DR. HORN: What practicable steps in limitation of armament did you obtain in London?

VON RIBBENTROP: It is known that Adolf Hitler, that means Germany, left the League of Nations and the Disarmament Conference because it was impossible to carry through the German

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desires by way of negotiations. Hitler therefore saw no other possibility, except to achieve this aim through the efforts of the German people themselves. He knew and, of course, realized that a risk was involved, but after the experiences of the preceding few years no other means remained, so that then Germany started to rearm independently.

[Dr. Horn attempted to interrupt.]

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to finish my answer to your question.

As a practical result of this, the following happened: In the course of the year 1934 there came about a closer contact between the German and the British Governments. There followed visits by British statesmen to Berlin, by Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden, and during these visits the suggestion was brought up as to whether it would not be possible to come to an agreement or an understanding at least as far as naval matters were concerned.

Hitler was very much interested in this idea and in the course of the negotiations between the British and the German Governments it was agreed that I should be sent to London to attempt to come to a naval agreement with the British Government.

It is not necessary for me to go into details of the pact which actually materialized. Hitler himself had said from the beginning that, in order to come to a final understanding with England, one would have to acknowledge the absolute naval supremacy of Great Britain once and for all. It was he who suggested the naval ratio of 100 to 35, which was an entirely different ratio from that which was negotiated between Germany and England before 1914.

After relatively short negotiations this naval agreement was then concluded in London. It was very important for future AngloGerman relations, and at that time it represented the first practical result of an actual armament limitation.

DR. HORN: At that time did France agree to this rearmament and what were your personal efforts in this step?

VON RIBBENTROP: I might say in advance that Hitler and I were extremely happy about this pact. I know, it was then styled once by certain circles, to use an English expression, an "eyewash." I can say here from my own personal experience that I have never seen Adolf Hitler so happy as at the moment when I was able to tell him personally, in Hamburg, of the conclusion of this agreement.

DR. HORN: And what was France's attitude to this pact?

VON RIBBENTROP: With France the situation was, of course, a little difficult. I had already noticed this while the negotiations

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were taking place, for one had deviated from the armament limitation of the Versailles Treaty. Then I myself proposed to the gentlemen of the Foreign Office -- I can mention their names, they were Sir Robert Craigie in particular and also Little, who was then a British Admiral -- that I would go to France so that I also could utilize my relations with French statesmen and make clear to them the usefulness of this agreement for a future German-Anglo-French understanding.

I should like to point out something here. In this courtroom, sometime ago, a film was shown in which a speech I made for the newsreels of that time, at the conclusion of this naval agreement, was presented as proof of the duplicity of German diplomacy. At that time I purposely made this speech in London in order to record and to declare before the whole world that this did not concern merely one-sided British-German matters, but that it was the wish of Hitler -- and also the spirit of the naval agreement -- to bring about a general limitation of armament, and that this naval pact was also designed to improve finally the relations between France and Germany. This wish was real and sincere.

I then went to France, spoke with French statesmen and, I believe, did help to some extent so that this first step in the limitation of armaments was considered a reasonable measure by many Frenchmen in view of the fact that in the long run equality of rights could not be withheld from the German people.

DR. HORN: Then you were appointed Ambassador to London. What led to this appointment?

VON RIBBENTROP: That came about as follows: In the time following the naval agreement, which was hailed with joy by the widest circles in England, I made great efforts to bring Lord Baldwin and the Fuehrer together, and I should like to mention here that the preliminary arrangements for this meeting had already been made by a friend of Lord Baldwin, a Mr. Jones. The Fuehrer had agreed to fly to Chequers to meet Lord Baldwin, but unfortunately Lord Baldwin declined at the last minute. What led

to his declining, I do not know, but there is no doubt that certain forces in England at the time did not wish this German-British understanding.

Then in 1936, when the German Ambassador Von Hoesch died, I said to myself, that on behalf of Germany one should make one last supreme effort to come to a good understanding with England. I might mention in this connection, that at that time I had already been appointed State Secretary of the Foreign Office by Hitler and had asked him personally that that appointment be cancelled and that I be sent to London as Ambassador.

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The following may have led to this decision of Hitler's. Hitler had a very definite conception of England's balance of power theory, but my view perhaps deviated somewhat from his. My conviction was that England would always continue to support her old balance of power theory, whereas Hitler was of the opinion that this theory of balance of power was obsolete, and that from now on, England should tolerate, that is, should welcome a much stronger Germany in view of the changed situation in Europe, and in view of Russia's development of strength. In order to give the Fuehrer a definite and clear picture of how matters actually stood in England--that was at any rate one of the reasons why the Fuehrer sent me to England. Another reason was that at that time we hoped, through relations with the still very extensive circles in England which were friendly to Germany and supported a German-English friendship, to make the relations between the two countries friendly and perhaps even to reach a permanent agreement.

Hitler's goal was finally and always the German-English pact.

DR. HORN: In what way was your ambassadorial activity hampered in England?

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to say first that I was repeatedly in England in the 1930's, mainly from 1935 to 1936, and, acting on instructions from the Fuehrer, I sounded out the opinions there on the subject of a German-British pact. The basis of this pact is known. It was to make the naval ratio of 100 to 35 permanent. Secondly the integrity of the so-called Low Countries, Belgium and Holland, and also France was to be guaranteed by the two countries forever and -- this was the Fuehrer's idea -- Germany should recognize the British Empire and should be ready to stand up, if necessary even with the help of her own power, for the preservation and maintenance of the British Empire; and England, in return, should recognize Germany as a strong power in Europe.

It has already been said, and I should like to repeat, that these efforts in the 1930's unfortunately did not lead to any results. It was one of the Fuehrer's deepest disappointments -- and I must mention that here, for it is very important for the further course of events -- that this pact upon which he had placed such very great hopes and which he had regarded as the cornerstone of his foreign policy did not materialize in these years. What the forces were which prevented its materializing I cannot say, because I do not know. In any case we got no further.

I came back to this question several times while I was Ambassador in London and discussed it with circles friendly to Germany. And I must say that there also were many Englishmen who had a very positive attitude towards this idea.

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DR. HORN: Did you also meet with any attitude that was negative?

VON RIBBENTROP: There was naturally a strong element in England which did not look favorably upon this pact or this idea of close relations with Germany, because of considerations of principle and perhaps because of traditional considerations of British policy against definite obligations of this kind. I should like to mention here briefly, even though this goes back to the year 1936, that during the Olympic Games in the year 1936 I tried to win the very influential British politician, the present Lord Vansittart, to this idea. I had at that time a very long discussion of several hours' duration with him in Berlin. Adolf Hitler also received him and likewise spoke with him about the same subject. Lord Vansittart, even though our personal relations were good, showed a certain reserve.

In the year 1937, when I was in London, I saw that two clearly different trends were gradually forming in England; the one trend was very much in favor of promoting good relations with Germany; the second trend did not wish such close relations.

There were -- I believe that I do not need to mention names, for they are well known -- those gentlemen who did not wish such close relations with Germany, Mr. Winston Churchill, who was later Prime Minister, and others.

I then made strenuous efforts in London in order to promote this idea but other events occurred which made my activity there most difficult. There was first of all, the Spanish policy. It is well known that civil war raged in Spain at that time and that in London the so-called Nonintervention Commission was meeting.

I therefore, as Ambassador to the Court of St. James, had a difficult task. On the one hand, with all means at my disposal, I wished to further German-English friendship and to bring about the, German-English pact, but on the other hand, I had to carry out the instructions of my government in regard to the Nonintervention, Commission and Spain. These instructions, however, were often in direct opposition to certain aims of British policy. Therefore it came about that this sort of League of Nations which the Nonintervention Commission represented at that time, and of which I was the authorized German member, prejudiced the chief aim with which Adolf Hitler had sent me to London.

But I have to say here -- if I may and am supposed to explain that period openly in the interest of the case -- that it was not only the policy regarding Spain, but that in these years, 1937 until the beginning of 1938, that section which did not want a pact with Germany, doubtless made itself constantly more evident in England; and that, today, is a historical fact. Why? The answer is very simple,

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very clear. These circles regarded a Germany strengthened by National Socialism as a factor which might disturb the traditional British balance of power theory and policy on the Continent.

I am convinced that Adolf Hitler at that time had no intention at all of undertaking on his part anything against England, but that he had sent me to London with the most ardent wish for really reaching an understanding with England. From London I reported to the Fuehrer about the situation. And before this Tribunal now I wish to clarify one point, a point which has been brought up very frequently and which is relevant to my own defense. It has often been asserted that I reported to the Fuehrer from England that England was degenerate and would perhaps not fight. I may and must establish the fact here, that from the beginning I reported exactly the opposite to the Fuehrer. I informed the Fuehrer that in my opinion the English ruling class and the English people had a definitely heroic attitude and that this nation was ready at any time to fight to the utmost for the existence of its empire. Later, in the course of the war and after a conference with the Fuehrer, I once discussed this subject in public, in a speech made in 1941.

Summarizing the situation in London in the years 1937 and 1938, while I was ambassador, I can at least say that I was fully cognizant of the fact that it would be very difficult to conclude a pact with England. But even so, and this I always reported, all efforts would have to be made to come by means of a peaceful settlement to an understanding with England as a decisive factor in German policy, that is, to create such a relation between the development of German power and the British basic tendencies and views on foreign policy that these two factors would not conflict.

DR. HORN: During the time you were ambassador you concluded the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan. How was it that just you, the ambassador, concluded that pact?

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to make the preliminary remark that in 1938 I was appointed Foreign Minister on 4 February. On 4 February I was in Berlin. The Fuehrer called me and informed me that he had appointed me Foreign Minister. After that -- I am not sure, are you talking of the Three Power Pact?

DR. HORN: No, you have misunderstood me. During your activity as ambassador you concluded the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936, which in 1937 was joined by Italy and later on by Spain, as well as other countries. How was it that you, as ambassador, concluded this pact?

VON RIBBENTROP: Adolf Hitler at that time considered the ideological difference between Germany, that is, National Socialism

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and communism actually one of the decisive factors of his policy. Therefore, the question arose as to how a way could be found at all to win over other countries to counter communistic tendencies. The problem, therefore, was an ideological one. In the year 1933, I believe, Hitler discussed with me for the

first time, the question of whether a closer contact with Japan could be established in some form or other. I replied that I personally had certain connections with Japanese persons and would establish contact. When I did so it came to light that Japan had the same anti-Comintern attitude as Germany. Out of these conversations of the years 1933, 1934, 1935, I believe, the idea gradually crystallized that one might make these common efforts the subject of a pact. I believe it was one of my assistants who had the idea of concluding the Anti-Comintern. Pact. I presented this idea to the Fuehrer and the Fuehrer approved of it. However, since it was, so to speak, an ideological question, he did not wish at that time that it be done through the official channels of German politics and therefore he instructed me to prepare this pact which then was concluded in my office in Berlin, as I believe, in the course of the year 1936.

DR. HORN: If I understand you correctly, this pact was concluded by you because you were the head of the Bureau Ribbentrop?

VON RIBBENTROP: That is correct. The Bureau Ribbentrop consisted chiefly of me and just a few aides. But it is correct to say that the Fuehrer wished that I conclude this pact because he did not wish to give it an official air.

DR. HORN: Did this pact have aims of practical policy or only ideological aims?

VON RIBBENTROP: It is certain that this pact, on principle, I should say, had an ideological aim. It was meant to oppose the work of the Comintern in the various countries at that time. But naturally it also contained a, political element. This political element was anti-Russian at the time, since Moscow was the representative of the Comintern. idea. Therefore, the Fuehrer and I had a notion that through this pact a certain balance or counterbalance against the Russian efforts or against Russia was being created in a political sense as well, because Russia was at odds with Germany in respect to ideology and also, of course, to politics.

THE PRESIDENT: Dr. Horn, do you and the defendant really think it is necessary to take as long as the defendant has taken to tell us why he, as an ambassador in London, was called upon to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact?

DR. HORN: It is very difficult for me to hear Your Honor.

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THE PRESIDENT: What I asked you was whether you and the defendant think it necessary for the defendant to make such a long speech in answer to your question, why he, as ambassador in London, was employed to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact. He has spoken for at least 5 minutes about it.

DR. HORN: On 4 February 1938, you were made Foreign Minister. What were the reasons for this appointment?

VON RIBBENTROP: I have already said that on 4 February 1938 I was in Berlin. The Fuehrer called me and informed me that, because of a shift in various higher positions, he was going to appoint a new

Foreign Minister, also that he had appointed the then Foreign Minister Von Neurath, President of the Secret Cabinet Council. I replied to the Fuehrer that I, of course, would be glad to accept this appointment.

DR. HORN: On this occasion you also received a high rank in the SS? The Prosecution have asserted that this rank was not purely honorary. Is that true?

VON RIBBENTROP: I must correct this point, I believe. I had received a rank in the SS prior to this time and I do not recall whether it was on the occasion of this appointment or later on that I became SS GruppenFuehrer. The Fuehrer bestowed on me the rank and the uniform of an SS GruppenFuehrer. That was a position, which formerly in the Army used to be known as a rank a la suite. It happened that I agreed definitely with the SS idea at that time. My relations with Himmler were also quite good at the time. I considered the SS idea at that time the possible basis for producing and creating an idealistic class of leaders, somewhat like that existing in England, and such as emerged symbolically through the heroism of our Waffen-SS during the war. Later on, it is true, my attitude towards Himmler changed. But the Fuehrer bestowed this rank on me because he wished that within the Party and at the Party meetings, I should wear the Party uniform and have a Party rank.

May I at this time state briefly my attitude toward the Party. Yesterday or the day before yesterday, I believe, the question was raised as to whether I was a true National Socialist. I do not claim to be competent to judge this question. It is a fact that it was only in later years that I joined Adolf Hitler. I did not pay very much attention to the National Socialist doctrines and program nor to the racial theories, with which I was not very familiar. I was not anti-Semitic, nor did I fully understand the church question, although I had left the church a long time ago. I had my own inner reasons for doing so, reasons connected with the early 20's and the development of the church in Germany in

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those years. However, I believe that I have always been a good Christian. What drew me to the Party, as I recognized at the time, was the fact that the Party wanted a strong, flourishing, and socialistic Germany. That was what I wanted too. For that reason, in the year 1932, I did, after thorough deliberation, become a member of the NSDAP.

DR. HORN: Had you put your services at the disposal of the Party before that date, as the Prosecution assert, namely, from 1930 on?

VON RIBBENTROP: It was in 1930 when in the large Reichstag election National Socialism obtained more than 100 seats in the German Reichstag. I set forth yesterday, and perhaps do not need to go into detail any more, what conditions in Germany were at that time. However, during the years 1930, 1931 and 1932 I gradually came nearer to the Party. Then from 1932 on -- I believe I entered the Party in August 1932 -- from that moment on until the end of this war I devoted my entire strength to National Socialist Germany and exhausted my strength in so doing. I wish to profess frankly before this Tribunal and before the world that I have always endeavored to be a good National Socialist and that I was proud

of the fact that I belonged to a little group of men, idealists, who did not want anything else but to re-establish Germany's prestige in the world.

DR. HORN: What foreign political problems did Hitler describe to you as requiring solution, when you took office? What directives did he give you for the conduct of foreign policy?

VON RIBBENTROP: When I took office, the Fuehrer said relatively little to me. He said only that Germany had now assumed a new position, that Germany had once more joined the circle of nations having equal rights and that it was clear that in the future certain problems would also still have to be solved. In particular, I recall that he pointed out four problems which, sooner or later, would have to be solved. He emphasized that such problems could be solved only with a strong Wehrmacht, not by using it, but through its mere existence, because a country which was not strongly armed could practice no foreign policy whatsoever, but rather such a country operated, so to speak, in a vacuum as we had experienced during the past years. He said we would have to achieve clear-cut relations with our neighbors. The four problems he enumerated were, first of all, Austria; then he mentioned a solution of the Sudeten questions, of the question of the tiny Memel district and of the Danzig and the Corridor question, all problems which would have to be solved in one way or another. It would be my duty, he said, to assist him diplomatically in this task. From this moment

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on I did my best to assist the Fuehrer in the preparation of some solution of these problems in a way agreeable to Germany.

DR. HORN: Shortly after your appointment you ...

THE PRESIDENT: I believe this would be a good time to break off.

[A recess was taken.]

DR. HORN: Which course did German foreign policy take after you were appointed Foreign Minister?

VON RIBBENTROP: First I tried to get an over-all picture of the pending affairs of the Foreign Office and of the situation. German foreign policy, as I said before, had reached a certain stage, that is, Germany had regained prestige in the eyes of the world, and the future task would be to solve in some way or other the important and vital problems created in Europe by the Versailles Treaty. This was all the more necessary since, by way of example, ethnic questions always were material for conflict, that is, contained possibilities for conflict dangerous to a peaceful development in Europe.

During the period following I familiarized myself with the affairs of the ministry. That was at first not easy, as I was dealing with altogether new men. I should like to mention here that Hitler's attitude towards the Foreign Office was not always positive and, in continuing the efforts of Minister Von Neurath, my predecessor, I considered it my most important task to bring the Foreign Office closer to Hitler and to bridge the two spheres of ideas.

It was clear to me from the very beginning, after I took over the ministry, that I would be working, so to speak, in the shadow of a titan and that I would have to impose on myself certain limitations, that is to say, that I would not be in a position, one might almost say, to conduct the foreign policy as it is done by other foreign ministers, who are responsible to a parliamentary system or a parliament. The commanding personality of the Fuehrer naturally dominated the foreign policy as well. He occupied himself with all its details. It went like this more or less: I reported to him and forwarded to him important foreign policy reports through a liaison man, and Hitler in turn gave me definite orders as to what views I should take in regard to problems of foreign policy, *et cetera*.

In the course of these conversations the problem of Austria crystallized as the first and most important problem which had to be brought to some solution or other. Austria had always been a matter very close to the Fuehrer's heart, because he was himself a native of Austria and naturally, with Germany's power growing,

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the efforts already long in existence for bringing Germany and Austria more closely together became even more pronounced. At that time I did not yet know very much about this problem, since Hitler himself handled this problem for the most part.

DR. HORN: When you took over your office, or later, did you get to know the minutes of a conference of 5 November 1937 which has become known here under the name of the Hossbach document?

VON RIBBENTROP: I did not know this document, which has been mentioned here in various connections. I saw it here for the first time.

DR. HORN: Did Hitler ever say anything to you which conforms to the contents of this document?

VON RIBBENTROP: I do not recall all the details of the contents of this document, but it was the Fuehrer's practice to speak very little at all about his aims and intentions and his attitude in matters of principle. At any rate, this was his practice in dealing with me. He did say that Germany had to solve certain problems in Europe, as I said before, and that for this reason it was necessary to be strong. He also mentioned the possibility that this might lead to disagreements, but he said to me nothing more specific about this. On the contrary, he always emphasized to me that it was his desire to solve by diplomatic means these problems in Europe which had to be solved and that, once he had solved these problems, he had the intention of creating an ideal social state of the people and that the Germany he would then create would be a model modern social state with all the new edifices to which he attached special value. In other words, to me he did casually admit the possibility of an armed conflict, but he always said it was his unalterable aim, and that it had always been and was his intention, to achieve this solution of the "impossibility of Versailles," as he sometimes called it, in a peaceful way.

DR. HORN: Shortly after your appointment as Foreign Minister you were called by Hitler to Berchtesgaden to the conference with Schuschnigg. What was discussed there and what was your role in these conferences?

VON RIBBENTROP: Hitler informed me -- I recall this was on 12 February 1938 -- that he was going to meet Federal Chancellor Schuschnigg at the Obersalzberg. I do not remember the details. I see from my notes that this was on 12 February. One thing I know is that he told me that the solution to be achieved was that, in some form or other, the German National Socialists in Austria must be given assistance. Difficulties of all sorts had arisen there, the details of which I no longer recall. At any rate, I believe, there were a great many National Socialists in jail, and, as a consequence

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of the natural efforts of these Austrian people to bring about a closer contact with the Reich, this Austrian problem threatened to become a really serious problem between Germany and Austria.

Adolf Hitler told me at the time that I should be present in the Berghof. Later it was said, and I have heard it said here, that Adolf Hitler once declared that he intended to fight for the right for these 6 million Germans to decide their own fate under all circumstances during the year 1938. I do not recall that he said so but it is very well possible that he did say so. On the occasion of Schuschnigg's reception I was at the Obersalzberg. Hitler received Schuschnigg alone and had a long conversation with him. The details of this conversation are not known to me because I was not present. I recall that Schuschnigg saw me after this conversation and that I in turn had a long conversation with him.

DR. HORN: Did you at that time put Schuschnigg under political pressure, as the Prosecution asserts?

VON RIBBENTROP: No, that is not true. I remember very clearly my conversation with Schuschnigg, whereas the other details of what was going on at the Obersalzberg are not so clear in my memory, since I was not present at either the first or the second meeting between Schuschnigg and Hitler. My discussion with Schuschnigg proceeded in a very amicable fashion. I felt that Schuschnigg obviously was very greatly impressed by the Fuehrer and the Fuehrer's personality. I wish to say first that I do not know exactly the details of what Hitler wanted to achieve or discuss with Schuschnigg, so that on this subject matter I could say to him very little, or rather nothing. Our discussion therefore was confined to more general subjects. I told Schuschnigg that in my opinion these two countries must come into closer contact and that perhaps it was his historical task to assist in this and to co-operate; that the fact was undeniable that both nations were German, and two such German nations could not forever be separated by artificial barriers.

DR. HORN: Was it already at this conference that a recision of the German-Austrian Treaty of 1936 was discussed?

VON RIBBENTROP: I did not discuss this point with Schuschnigg and I believe that the Fuehrer did not do so either in any way because according to what Schuschnigg told me the Fuehrer had told him that certain measures would have to be carried out in Austria in order to eliminate the reasons for

conflict between the two countries. That is what I understood him to say without remembering any details. As I said, my discussion with him was very amicable, and I might mention that, when I suggested to Schuschnigg that the two countries would have to get into closer contact, Schuschnigg showed an altogether positive attitude towards this idea so that, to

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a certain extent, I was even surprised by his positive attitude at that time. There can be no talk of any pressure exerted on Schuschnigg during our discussion. However, the Fuehrer's discussion with him, I believe, was conducted in very clear language, because the Fuehrer wanted to reach some improvement in relations in order to solve the problems between the two countries, and to achieve this it was necessary for the two statesmen to reveal their thoughts openly. I have heard here, and I think this is from an entry in General [Jodl](#)'s diary, that heavy political and military pressure was exerted. I believe I can testify here that I knew nothing of any military or strong political pressure at this meeting between Schuschnigg and Hitler. I may reiterate that I am sure that the Fuehrer used clear and frank language with Schuschnigg, but I certainly did not notice any pressure of a military or a political kind, or anything in the nature of an ultimatum. Also I assume that General Jodl's remark -- I do not believe he was present -- is a diary entry based on hearsay. I should like to add that at that time -- and I have also stated this to several persons who were with me and also to the Fuehrer -- had an altogether positive and pleasant impression of Schuschnigg's personality. Schuschnigg even said that the two countries, and I remember these words exactly, were bound together by fate and that he would have to assist in some way in bringing these two countries closer together. There was no mention in this discussion of an Anschluss or any such thing. Whether the Fuehrer mentioned that, I do not know, but I do not believe so.

DR. HORN: At that time, or shortly after, did Hitler mention to you that he wished to deviate from the German-Austrian Treaty of 1936 and find some other solution?

VON RIBBENTROP: Hitler did not discuss this matter with me. If at all, I spoke very little with him about the Austrian problems. This may sound surprising, but it can be understood from the fact that it was only on 4 February that I took over the Foreign Office and that I first had to get familiar with all the problems. The Austrian problem was anyway, as I already said, a problem which was always dealt with by Hitler himself and which consequently was so to speak, merely taken note of in the Foreign Ministry, whereas it was directed by him personally. I know and I remember that the then Ambassador [Von Papen](#) also had the right to report directly to Hitler and that the Foreign Office received copies of these reports. These reports, I believe, were presented directly to Hitler by the Reich Chancellery, so that the problem was anchored rather in the Reich Chancellery than in the Foreign Office.

DR. HORN: You then went back to London in order to give up your post as ambassador. What did you hear in London regarding the development of the Austrian question?

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VON RIBBENTROP: I may say the following in this connection: I myself had always the idea that the Austrian problem should be solved by bringing about a treaty, a customs and currency union, between the two countries, since I personally believed that this was the most natural and the easiest way to bring about a close connection between the two countries. I might perhaps remind you at this point, that this idea of a currency union, or at least a customs union, was nothing new and had already been pursued by the governments before Hitler; it did not materialize at that time, I believe, because of the veto of the Allied powers. But it was a long-cherished wish of both countries. I might first answer your question concerning London. According to my notes, I went to London on 8 March. As I have already mentioned, I happened to be in Berlin for the celebration of the seizure of power on 30 January, I believe, and then was appointed Foreign Minister on 4 February. Because of this appointment I did not have the opportunity to take official leave in London. On 8 March 1938 I went to London. Before resigning my post I had a short conversation with Hitler, primarily about English matters. I remember that he remarked on this occasion that the Austrian problem beyond a doubt was progressing very nicely in line with the arrangements agreed upon with Schuschnigg at Berchtesgaden. I wish to add that I did not know all the details of the agreements but I still remember a small detail about which we sent an inquiry to the Reich Chancellery only a few weeks later for the information of our specialist on the Austrian question. After I arrived in London, I believe it was in the afternoon, I happened to hear over the radio in the embassy building a speech made by the then Federal Chancellor Schuschnigg in Innsbruck or in Graz I believe. I must say this speech took me very much by surprise. To go into details would take too long. Nor do I remember all the details. I do know that the entire manner, and, as it seemed to me, also the tone of this speech, was such that I immediately had the impression that the Fuehrer would not tolerate this, and that the entire speech, without any doubt, contradicted at least the spirit of the agreements made with the Fuehrer at the Obersalzberg. As I said, I was convinced that Adolf Hitler would do something about it; and I should like to say quite openly before this Tribunal that it appeared quite in order to me that the question be solved in some way or other, I mean, that one would have to speak to Schuschnigg very frankly, to prevent matters leading to a catastrophe, perhaps even a European catastrophe. Then, on the next morning, I had a long discussion with Lord Halifax. Lord Halifax had also received reports from Austria, and I tried, without knowing the situation fully, to explain to him that it was better to solve this problem now in one form or another, and that this would be precisely in the interests of the German-English efforts

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toward friendly relations; that in the long run the assumption would prove false that the friendship between Germany and England, as striven for by both countries, could be broken up by such a problem. Lord Halifax was not alarmed by the situation and told me, as far as I remember, that I should still have an opportunity to discuss these matters with the British Prime Minister Chamberlain at the breakfast which was to follow. After this I had breakfast with the then Prime Minister Chamberlain; during or after this breakfast I had a long conversation with Chamberlain. During this conversation Mr.

Chamberlain again emphasized his desire to reach an understanding with Germany. I was extremely happy to hear this and told him that I was firmly convinced that this was also the Fuehrer's attitude. He gave me a special message for the Fuehrer that this was his desire and that he would do everything he could in this direction. Shortly after this conversation telegrams arrived from Austria, from Vienna, I believe from the Minister or the British Consul. Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax asked me to come to their office. I believe the breakfast took place at 10 Downing Street and I went then to their office in order to discuss these telegrams. I told them that of course I had no precise reports; then the news of an ultimatum came, and later of the entry of German troops. We arranged that I should try to contact my government and that Lord Halifax would come to see me in the German Embassy in the afternoon to discuss these things further. I wish to emphasize that Mr. Chamberlain on this occasion also took a very composed and, it seemed to me, very sensible attitude towards the Austrian question. In the afternoon Lord Halifax visited me and we had a long talk. In the meantime the entry of German troops had become known. I should like to emphasize the fact that this talk with Lord Halifax was very amicable and that at the end of it I invited the English Foreign Minister to pay Germany another visit. He accepted with the remark that he would be glad to come and perhaps another exhibition of hunting trophies could be arranged.

DR. HORN: On the next morning you had a telephone conversation with the Defendant Goering. This telephone conversation has been put in evidence by the Prosecution, with the assertion that it is a proof of your double-crossing policy. What about that?

VON RIBBENTROP: That is not true. Reich Marshal Goering has already testified that this was a diplomatic conversation, and diplomatic conversations are carried on all over the world in the same way. But I may say that through this telephone conversation I learned for the first time of the details of the events in Austria. Without going into details I heard, first of all, that this vote without doubt was not in accordance with the true will of the Austrian people, and a number of other points which Goering asked me to

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mention in my conversations with the British ministers. But I should like to say that actually such conversations did not take place because I had already taken leave of the official English circles. In fact, I did not have any further talks after my conversation with Goering; just a few hours after this conversation I left London and went to Berlin and later to Vienna.

I might say that first I flew to Karinhall to visit Goering and talked to him and found him just as happy about the Anschluss -- that is, not about the Anschluss but about the whole Austrian development as I myself was. We all were happy. Then I flew, I believe, on the same day, to Vienna and arrived there at about the same time as Adolf Hitler. In the meantime I heard about the Anschluss and it was only in Vienna that I learned that the idea of the Anschluss had definitely not occurred to Hitler until his drive through Austria. I believe it was prompted by a demonstration in Linz and then he decided very quickly, I think, to accomplish the Anschluss.

DR. HORN: What problem did Hitler mention to you as the next one which you should solve following the Anschluss?

VON RIBBENTROP: The next problem which Hitler outlined to me on 4 February was the problem of the Sudeten Germans. This problem, however, was not a problem posed by Hitler or the Foreign Office or any office, it was a de facto problem that existed of itself. I believe it was the American prosecutor who said here that with the dissolution of Czechoslovakia a chapter ended which was one of the saddest in the history of nations, namely the oppression and destruction of the small Czechoslovak nation. I should like to state the following from my own knowledge of these matters.

One may speak in this sense of a Czechoslovak State but not of a Czechoslovak nation, because it was a state of different nationalities, a state which comprised the most varied national groups. I mention, besides Czechs, only Germans, Hungarians, Poles, Ruthenians, Carpatho-Ukrainians, Slovaks, *et cetera*. This shows that quite heterogeneous elements had been welded together in 1919 to form the state. It is certain, and probably a historical fact, that the efforts of the different nationalities within the artificially welded state were divergent to a certain extent and that the Czechs, following their own tendencies, tried to surround these nationalities with a strong ring, I should like to say, with an iron ring. This produced pressure as pressure always created counterpressure, counterpressure from the various nationalities of this state, and it is evident that a strong Germany, a Germany of National Socialism at that time, exerted a strong power of attraction on all the national segments in Europe; or, at any rate, on those living close to the German border and partly, I might say, on the others as well. So it came about that the German minorities in the Sudetenland, who, since 1919, had been

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constantly exposed to a considerable pressure on the part of Prague now were subjected to still greater pressure. I do not believe I have to go into details, but I can say from my own knowledge, and even from my own discussions while I was ambassador in London, that the question of the Sudetenland was very clearly understood by the Foreign Office in London and that it was precisely England that very often before 1938 had supported certain interests of the Sudeter Germans in co-operation with Konrad Henlein.

After the seizure of power by Adolf Hitler the suppression of these German minorities undoubtedly increased. I should also like to point out, and I know this from having read the files of the Foreign Office at the time, that the League of Nations' Committee for Minorities had a tremendous amount of documents on the Sudeten Germans and the great impediments encountered by the Germans in practicing and living their own cultural life.

I do not believe it is too much to say that the manner in which the Sudetenland was treated by Prague was, even in the opinion of the competent and unprejudiced authorities of the League of Nations, in no way in accord with the provisions of the League of Nations regarding minorities. I myself thought it was absolutely necessary to reach some solution in order that this problem might not become a matter of conflict, whereby again, as in the case of Austria, all Europe would be stirred up. I should like to

emphasize that the Foreign Office and I always endeavored, from the very beginning, to solve the Sudeten German problem by way of diplomatic negotiations with the main signatory powers of Versailles. And I might add that it was my personal conviction, which I also expressed to Hitler, that with sufficient time on hand and appropriate action, the Germany that we had in 1938 could solve this problem in a diplomatic, that is, peaceful way.

The Prosecution have charged me with having stirred up unrest and discord in Czechoslovakia by illegal means and thereby with having consciously helped to bring about the outbreak of this crisis. I do not deny in any way that between the Sudeten German Party and the NSDAP there had been connections for a long time which aimed at taking care of the Sudeten-German interests. Nor do I wish to deny, for example, what was mentioned here, that the Sudeten German Party was supported with certain funds from the Reich. I might even say, and I believe the Czechoslovak Government will confirm this, that that was an open secret which was well known in Prague. However, it is not correct to say that anything was done on the part of the Foreign Office and by me to direct these efforts in such a way that a really serious problem might arise. I do not want to go into further detail, but I should like to mention one more point. Documents have been mentioned about arrests of Czech

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nationals in Germany as reprisals for Czech treatment of Sudeten Germans. To that I can say merely that these were measures which can be understood and explained only in view of the situation at that time, but which were not brought about by us in the Foreign Office in order to make the situation more critical. On the contrary, in the further course of events, I attempted through the legation in Prague as well as through efforts of the gentlemen of my office to restrain the activities of the Sudeten German Party. I believe that this has to some extent been proved clearly by the documents which have been made known here. I do not have these documents before me, so I cannot deal with them in greater detail; but I believe that perhaps the Defense have the opportunity to make these matters clear in detail.

DR. HORN: What brought about the critical situation in summer?

VON RIBBENTROP: It is natural and has always been the case that such a nationality has its own dynamics. This question of the split of German groups bordering on Germany was often referred to by us in the Foreign Office as "the sinister problem," that is a problem which could not be solved in a way compatible with the interests of foreign policy. We had to deal here not with letters and paragraphs but with living people who had laws and dynamics of their own. Therefore the Sudeten German Party naturally strove for greater and greater independence; it cannot be denied that a number of influential leaders, at least at that time, demanded absolute autonomy, if not the possibility of joining the Reich. This is perfectly clear, and that was also the goal of the Sudeten German Party. For the Foreign Office and German foreign policy, as well as for Hitler, of course, manifold difficulties arose because of this. As I said before, I tried to get the foreign policy affairs under control. At the time I received Konrad Henlein -- I believe once or twice, I do not remember exactly -- and asked him not to do anything, as far as Prague was concerned, in the pursuit of his political goals that might put German foreign policy

into a state of emergency. This was perhaps not always so easy for Henlein either, and I know that the leaders of the Sudeten German Party could naturally approach and be received by other offices of the Reich; also Adolf Hitler himself, who was interested in this problem, occasionally received these leaders. The crisis, or rather the whole situation, developed more and more critically, because on the one hand the Sudeten Germans insisted on their demands in Prague more and more openly and stubbornly and because the Czechs, the Government in Prague, opposed these demands, which resulted in excesses, arrests and so on. Thus the situation became even more critical. At that time I often spoke with the Czech Minister. I asked him to meet the

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demands of the Sudeten Germans for autonomy and all their demands to the furthest extent possible. However, matters developed in such a way that the attitude displayed by Prague became more stubborn, and so did the attitude of the Sudeten Germans.

DR. HORN: What brought about Chamberlain's visit? What were the reasons for this visit and for the role played by you on that occasion?

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to interpolate here that in the summer of 1938 the situation was driving more and more toward a crisis. Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson in Berlin, with whom I had often discussed this problem and who was making efforts on his part to bridge matters, undoubtedly made continuous reports to his government. I do not know exactly today, but I believe that it was through his initiative that Lord Runciman went to Prague. Runciman undoubtedly went to Prague in good faith and tried to get a clear picture of the situation. He also rendered an opinion which, as far as I recall, was to the effect -- I do not remember the wording -- that the right to exercise self-determination, immediate self-determination, should not be denied the Sudetenland. Thus, I believe, this opinion was favorable for the Sudeten Germans. Nevertheless, the crisis was there. I do not remember exactly what the date was, but I believe it happened that through Ambassador Henderson, Chamberlain got in touch with the Reich Government. In this way Chamberlain's visit to the Fuehrer at the Obersalzberg came about during the first half of September. Regarding this visit, there is not very much to be said. The Fuehrer spoke alone with Chamberlain on that occasion. I do know, however, and we all felt it, that the visit took place in an altogether good and pleasant atmosphere. As far as I remember the Fuehrer told me that he had told Chamberlain frankly that the demand of the Sudeten Germans for self-determination and freedom in some form or other would have to be met now. Chamberlain, I believe -- and this was the substance of that conference -- replied that he would inform the British Cabinet of these wishes of the German Government and that he would then make further statements.

DR. HORN: How did the second visit of Chamberlain to Godesberg come about afterwards?

VON REBBENTROP: As far as I recall, matters did not progress satisfactorily. The situation in the Sudetenland became more difficult and threatened to develop into a very serious crisis, not only within Czechoslovakia but also between Germany and Czechoslovakia, and thereby into a European crisis. The

result was that Chamberlain once more took the initiative and thus his visit to Godesberg came about; I believe this was in the middle of September or during the second half of September.

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DR. HORN: How, then, was the Sudeten German question solved, and what was your part in this solution?

VON RIBBENTROP: May I first report about Godesberg? In view of the crisis which had developed, Hitler informed Mr. Chamberlain at Godesberg that now he had to have a solution of this question under all circumstances. I might emphasize that I knew nothing regarding details of a military nature at that time, but I do know that the Fuehrer concerned himself with the possibility that this problem might have to be solved by military power. He told Mr. Chamberlain at Godesberg that a solution of the Sudeten German problem would have to be found as rapidly as possible. Mr. Chamberlain was of the opinion that it would be difficult to win Prague over so quickly to a solution, and finally things broke down altogether at the conference. Adolf Hitler then personally dictated a memorandum which he or I was to give to Mr. Chamberlain. Then Sir Horace Wilson, a friend of Mr. Chamberlain, visited me, a man who deserves much credit in bridging disagreements. I succeeded in arranging for another meeting in the evening. During this meeting, which started in a rather cool atmosphere, the Fuehrer received a report of Czechoslovakia's mobilization. This was a most deplorable circumstance since Hitler, just at this moment, resented that very strongly, and both he and Mr. Chamberlain wanted to break off the conference. This happened, I believe, exactly at the moment when the interpreter was about to read the Fuehrer's memorandum containing a proposal for the solution of the Sudeten German problem. By a remark and a short conversation with Hitler and then with Chamberlain, I succeeded in straightening matters out. Negotiations were resumed, and after a few hours of negotiations the result was that Mr. Chamberlain told the Fuehrer he could see now that something had to be done and that he was ready, on his part, to submit this memorandum to the British Cabinet. I believe he also said that he would suggest to the British Cabinet, that is to say, to his ministerial colleagues, that compliance with this memorandum be recommended to Prague. The memorandum contained as a solution, in general outlines, the annexation of the Sudetenland by the Reich. I believe, the Fuehrer expressed his desire in the memorandum that, in view of the critical situation there, it would be advisable that this be carried out, if possible, within a definite period of time -- I believe, by 1 October, that was within 10 days or two weeks. Mr. Chamberlain then departed and a few days passed. The crisis did not improve but rather became worse. I remember that very well. Then, during the last part of September, I do not have the date here, the French Ambassador came and said that he had good news about the Sudeten German question. Later on the British Ambassador also called. At the same time -- Reich

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Marshal Goering has already testified to this -- Italy wanted to take part in the solution of the crisis acting on a wish made known to Goering by Mussolini and offered to mediate. Then came Mussolini's proposal that a conference be held which proposal was accepted by England, France, and Germany. The French Ambassador, and later on the British Ambassador, saw the Fuehrer and outlined on a map the approximate solution which apparently was being proposed by France, England, and Italy as a solution of the Sudeten problem. I still remember that the Fuehrer in the first place stated to the French Ambassador that this proposal was not satisfactory, whereupon the French Ambassador declared that of course further discussions should be held regarding this question and the question of where Germans really were living and how far the Sudetenland extended; all these questions could still be discussed in detail.

Anyway, as far as the French Government was concerned -- and I believe, Sir Neville Henderson used similar words later at his reception by the Fuehrer -- the Fuehrer could be assured that the British as well as the French intended to contribute to the solution of this problem in conformity with the German view.

Then came the Munich conference. I take it I need not go into the details of this conference; I should like only to describe briefly the results of it. The Fuehrer explained to the statesmen, with the aid of a map, the necessity, as he saw it, of annexing a particular part of the Sudetenland to the German Reich to reach final satisfaction. A discussion arose; Mussolini, the Italian Chief of Government, agreed in general with Hitler's ideas. The English Prime Minister made at first certain reservations and also mentioned that perhaps the details might be discussed with the Czechs, with Prague. Daladier, the French Minister, said, as far as I recall, that he thought that since this problem had already been broached, the four great powers should make a decision here and now. In the end this opinion was shared by all the four statesmen; as a result the Munich Agreement was drawn up providing that the Sudetenland should be annexed to Germany as outlined on the maps that were on hand. The Fuehrer was very pleased and happy about this solution, and, with regard to other versions of this matter which I have heard during the Trial here, I should like to emphasize here once more particularly that I also was happy. We all were extremely happy that in this way in this form the matter had been solved.

THE PRESIDENT: We will adjourn until 10 minutes past 2.

[The Tribunal recessed until 1410 hours.]

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Afternoon Session

THE PRESIDENT: The Tribunal will sit tomorrow morning from 10 o'clock until 1 in open session. And now before going on, Dr. Horn, the Tribunal wish me to say that they think that entirely too much time is being taken up by the defendant in detailed accounts of negotiations which led up to an agreement which is a matter of history and which is perfectly well known to everybody. That is not the case which the defendant has to meet; what the defendant has to meet is not the making of agreements

which are perfectly well known, but the breach of those agreements by Germany and any part which he may have played in the breach of those agreements. It is very important that the time of this Tribunal should not be taken up by unnecessary details of that sort.

DR. HORN: What foreign political reaction did the Munich Agreement have?

VON RIBBENTROP: The Munich Agreement is well known. Its contents were the following: Germany and England should never again wage war; the naval agreement on the ratio of 100 to 35 was to be permanent and, in important matters, consultations were to be resorted to. Through this agreement the atmosphere between Germany and England was undoubtedly cleared up to a certain degree. It was to be expected that the success of this pact would lead to a final understanding. The disappointment was great when, a few days after Munich, rearmament at any cost was announced in England. Then England started on a policy of alliance and close relationship with France. In November 1938 trade policy measures were taken against Germany, and in December 1938 the British Colonial Secretary made a speech in which a "no" was put to any revision of the colonial question. Contact with the United States of America was also established. Our reports of that period, as I remember them, showed an increased -- I should like to say -- stiffening of the English attitude toward Germany; and the impression was created in Germany of a policy which practically aimed at the encirclement of Germany.

DR. HORN: You are accused by the Prosecution of having contributed to the separation of Slovakia from Czechoslovakia in violation of international law. What part did you take in the Slovakian declaration of independence?

VON RIBBENTROP: There is no doubt that there were relations between Slovaks and quite a number of members of the National Socialist German Workers Party. These tendencies naturally were known to the Foreign Office, and it would be wrong to say that we in any way did not welcome them. But it is not correct to say that

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the autonomy was demanded or forced by us in any way. I remember that Dr. Tiso proclaimed this autonomy; and the Prague Government, under the influence of Munich, also recognized the autonomy. What the situation was like at the time after Munich can be seen from the fact that all minorities of Czechoslovakia wanted autonomy and independence. Shortly thereafter the Carpatho-Ukrainians declared their independence and others as well had similar aspirations. In the Munich Agreement, I should like to add, there was a clause according to which Germany and Italy were to give Czechoslovakia a guarantee; but a declaration to this effect was not made. The reason for that was that Poland, after the Munich Agreement, sent an ultimatum to Czechoslovakia, and on her own initiative, severed the Polish minorities and occupied these areas. The Hungarians also wanted autonomy, or rather, incorporation of Hungarian areas; and certain areas of Czechoslovakia were thereupon given to Hungary by the Vienna decision. The situation in Czechoslovakia, however, was not yet clear and also remained difficult during the following period. Then the Slovak, Tuka, approached us. He wanted to

win Germany's approval for Slovakia's independence. The Fuehrer received Tuka at that time and, after a few interludes, the final result was the declaration of independence of Slovakia made by Tiso on 13 March. The Prosecution have submitted a document in which I am alleged to have said, during the conversation which took place between the Fuehrer and Tiso, that it was only a matter of hours, not of days, that Slovakia would have to come to a decision. However, this was to be understood to mean that at that time preparations for an invasion had been made by Hungary in order to occupy Carpatho-Ukraine as well as some other regions of Slovakia. We wanted to prevent a war between Slovakia and Hungary or between Czechoslovakia and Hungary; Hitler was greatly concerned about it, and therefore he gladly complied with Tiso's desire. Later, after the declaration of Slovakia's independence by the Slovak parliament, he complied with Tiso's request and took over the protection of Slovakia.

DR. HORN: What brought about Hacha's visit to Berlin on 14 March 1939?

VON RIBBENTROP: Events in Slovakia had their repercussions, of course, and chiefly very strong excesses against racial Germans in the area of Prague, Brunn, Iglau, *et cetera*, were reported to Hitler. Many fugitives came into the old Reich. In the winter of 1938-39 I repeatedly attempted to discuss these matters with the Prague Government. Hitler was convinced that a development was being initiated in Prague which could not be tolerated by the German Reich. It was the attitude of the press and the influential government circles in Prague. The Fuehrer also wished that the

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Czech nation should reduce her military power, but this was refused by Prague.

During these months I tried repeatedly to maintain good German relations with Prague. In particular I spoke frequently with Chvalkovsky, the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister. In the middle of March, Chvalkovsky, the Czechoslovakian Foreign Minister, turned to our German representative in Prague to find out whether Hitler would give Hacha the opportunity of a personal interview. I reported this to the Fuehrer and the Fuehrer agreed to receive Hacha; however, he told me that he wished to deal with this matter personally. To that effect I had an exchange of telegrams with Prague: A reserved attitude should be taken in Prague but Hacha should be told that the Fuehrer would receive him.

At this point I should like to mention briefly that the Foreign Office and I myself did not know anything at this date of impending military events. We learned about these things only shortly before they happened. Before the arrival of Hacha I asked the Fuehrer whether a treaty was to be prepared. The Fuehrer answered, as I recall distinctly, that he had the intention of going far beyond that. After the arrival of Hacha in Berlin I visited him at once and he told me he wanted to place the fate of the Czech State in the Fuehrer's hands. I reported this to the Fuehrer and the Fuehrer instructed me to draft an agreement. The draft was submitted to him and corrected later on, as I remember. Hacha was then received by the Fuehrer and the results of this conference, as far as I know, are already known here and have been submitted in documentary form so that I do not need to go into it.

I know that Adolf Hitler at that time spoke pointedly to Hacha and told him that he intended to occupy Czechoslovakia. It concerned old historic territory which he intended to take under his protection. The Czechs were to have complete autonomy and their own way of living, and he believed that the decision which was being made on that day would result in great benefit for the Czech people. While Hacha talked to the Fuehrer, or rather afterwards -- I was present at the Fuehrer's conference with Hacha -- I had, a long discussion with the Foreign Minister Chvalkovsky. He adopted our point of view fairly readily and I asked him to influence Hacha so that the Fuehrer's decision and the whole action might be carried out without bloodshed.

I believe it was the deep impression made on him first of all by the Fuehrer and then by what Adolf Hitler had told him which caused Hacha to get in touch by telephone with his Government in Prague and also, I believe, with the Chief of the General Staff. I do not know this exactly. He obtained the approval of his Government to sign the agreement which I mentioned at the beginning. This

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agreement was then signed by Hitler, Hacha, and both the Foreign Ministers, that is by myself also. Then Hacha, as I recall, gave instructions that the German Army should be received cordially and, as far as I know, the march into and the occupation of Czechoslovakia, that is Bohemia and Moravia, was completed without serious incident of any kind.

After the occupation I went to Prague with the Fuehrer. After the occupation, or maybe it was in Prague, the Fuehrer gave me in the morning a proclamation in which the countries of Bohemia and Moravia were declared to be a protectorate of the Reich. I read out this proclamation in Prague which, I may say, was somewhat a surprise to me. No protest of any sort was made as far as I recall, and I believe I might mention that the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, which the Fuehrer considered necessary in the ultimate interest of the Reich, took place for historical and economic reasons and above all for reasons of security for the German Reich. I believe that Goering has given the details.

DR. HORN: What did the European situation look like to you at the time of the occupation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia?

VON RIBBENTROP: I might say that after the proclamation at Prague I had a lengthy discussion with the Fuehrer. I pointed out to the Fuehrer that this occupation, of course, would have considerable repercussions in British-French circles. In this connection I should like to point out that in England those circles which had turned against Germany had grown larger and were led by important persons. In this connection I should like to come back to or mention briefly one incident which took place while I was still Ambassador in London, when Mr. Winston Churchill paid me a visit at the Embassy. Mr. Winston Churchill was not in the government at that time, and I believe he was not leader of the opposition -- it has already been discussed -- but he was one of the most outstanding personalities in England. I was especially interested in arranging a meeting between him and Adolf Hitler and therefore had asked him to come to see me at the Embassy. We had a conversation which lasted several hours and

the details of which I recall exactly. I believe it would go too far to relate all the details of this conversation. But whereas important men like Lord Vansittart in 1936 ...

THE PRESIDENT: Documents with reference to Mr. Winston Churchill at this time when he was not a member of the government have already been ruled by the Tribunal to be irrelevant and what he said and such a conversation as this appears to the Tribunal to be absolutely irrelevant and the Tribunal will not hear it.

VON RIBBENTROP: I have already said that I called the Fuehrer's attention to the British reaction. Adolf Hitler explained to me the

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necessity of the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, especially on historic and strategic grounds. I remember that in this connection he quoted especially the former French Minister of Aviation, Pierre Cot, who had called Bohemia and Moravia, that is Czechoslovakia, the "airplane carrier" against Germany. I believe it was Reich Marshal Goering who already mentioned that at that time we received intelligence reports of Russian pilots or Russian missions being on Czech airdromes.

Hitler said to me, and I remember these words distinctly, that he could not tolerate an inimical Czech thorn in the German flesh. One could get along well enough with the Czechs, but it was necessary for Germany to have in her hands the protection of these countries. He mentioned Soviet Russia, allied with Czechoslovakia, as a factor of inestimable power. When I mentioned England and her reaction he said that England was in no position to take over the protection of the Germans in Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, the structure of the Czechoslovakian State had disintegrated and Slovakia had become independent. Therefore he thought it was necessary in the interest of future German-English relations that the countries of Bohemia and Moravia should come into a close contact with the Reich. A protectorate seemed to him to be the appropriate form. Adolf Hitler said that while this question was utterly unimportant to England it was absolutely vital for Germany. This becomes evident if one glances at the map -- this is what he literally said. Besides, he said, he was unable to see how this solution could disturb the co-operation which was being striven for between Germany and England. Hitler pointed out that England -- by chance I still remember the figure had about 600 dominions, protectorates, and colonies and therefore should understand that such problems have to be solved.

I told Adolf Hitler about the difficulties which might confront Mr. Chamberlain personally because of this action on the part of Germany, that England might consider this an increase of Germany's power and so on; but the Fuehrer explained the whole question with the reasons I have mentioned before.

The English reaction at first, in the person of Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons, was rather a positive one. He said it was not a violation of the Munich Agreement and the British Government was not bound by any obligation. The Czechoslovakian State had disintegrated and the guarantee which England had said she would give had not come into effect, or rather the obligations of the guarantee did not apply under the circumstances.

I might say that all of us were glad that this attitude was taken in England. I believe it was 2 or 3 days later when Mr. Chamberlain in Birmingham...

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THE PRESIDENT: Dr. Horn, what have we got to do with the reactions in England unless they took the form of a note? I do not see what it has to do with it. What we want to know is the part that the Defendant Ribbentrop played in the breach of the Munich Agreement.

DR. HORN: The Defendant Von Ribbentrop is accused of having participated in a conspiracy when he was Foreign Minister, and it is charged that his foreign policy contributed to the bringing about of aggressive war. If the Defendant Von Ribbentrop wishes and is allowed to defend himself against these charges then he must be permitted to describe the circumstances as he saw them and the motives behind his actions. I am putting only such questions to the defendant in this case as have reference to his forming certain opinions.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I don't think you asked him any question about it. He was just ...

DR. HORN: It is not coming through quite audibly.

THE PRESIDENT: What I said was, I did not think you asked him any questions as to the reactions in England.

THE INTERPRETER: The channels seem to be disturbed in some way. I think they are getting more than one language.

THE PRESIDENT: The Tribunal had better adjourn, I think.

[A recess was taken.]

THE PRESIDENT: Dr. Horn, what I was attempting to say to you when the system broke down was that it seems to the Tribunal that the defendant ought to be able to keep his evidence within stricter limits and not to go into so much detail, and that, with regard to the reactions, the political reactions in England, they are not relevant in themselves, and that the bearing which they may have upon the case is really remote.

DR. HORN: What caused Hitler to commission you, in October 1938, to enter into negotiations with Poland?

VON RIBBENTROP: There had always been the minority problem in Poland, which had caused great difficulties. Despite the agreement of 1934, this situation had not changed. In the year 1938 the "de-Germanization" measures against German minorities were continued by Poland. Hitler wished to reach some clear settlement with Poland, as well as with other countries. Therefore he charged me, I believe during October 1938, to discuss with the Polish ambassador a final clarification of the problems existing between Germany and Poland.

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DR. HORN: Besides the minority problem, what other problems were involved?

VON RIBBENTROP: There were two questions: One, the minority problem, was the most burning one; the second problem was the question of Danzig and the Corridor, that is to say, of a connection with East Prussia.

DR. HORN: What was Hitler's and your attitude toward the Danzig and Corridor questions?

VON RIBBENTROP: It is clear that these two questions were the problems that had caused the greatest difficulties since Versailles. Hitler had to solve these problems sooner or later one way or another. I shared this point of view. Danzig was exposed to continual pressure by the Poles; they wanted to "Polandize" Danzig more and more and by October of 1938 from 800,000 to a million Germans, I believe, had been expelled from the Corridor or had returned to Germany.

DR. HORN: How did the Polish Ambassador take your suggestions in October 1938?

VON RIBBENTROP: The Polish Ambassador was reticent at first. He did not commit himself, nor could he do so. I naturally approached him with the problem in such a way that he could discuss it at ease with his government, and did not request, so to speak, a definitive answer from him. He said that of course he saw certain difficulties with reference to Danzig, and also a corridor to East Prussia was a question which required much consideration. He was very reticent, and the discussion ended with his promise to communicate my statements, made on behalf of the German Government, to his government, and to give me an answer in the near future.

DR. HORN: How did your second discussion with Ambassador Lipski on 17 November 1938 end?

VON RIBBENTROP: On 17 November 1938 Lipski came to see me and declared that the problem involved considerable difficulties and that the Danzig question in particular was very difficult in view of Poland's entire attitude.

DR. HORN: Did you then, on Hitler's order, submit the request to Lipski to take up direct negotiations with Foreign Minister Beck?

VON RIBBENTROP: I invited Foreign Minister Beck to Berlin.

DR. HORN: When did Foreign Minister Beck come to Berchtesgaden?

VON RIBBENTROP: Unfortunately, Minister Beck did not come to Berlin; he went to London.

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DR. HORN: You misunderstood my question. When did Foreign Minister Beck come to Berchtesgaden?

VON RIBBENTROP: Hitler had said that he wanted to speak with Mr. Beck personally about this problem. Thereupon Mr. Beck came; I do not know the date exactly...

DR. HORN: It was the beginning of January, on 5 January.

VON RIBBENTROP: ... to Berchtesgaden and had a long talk with Adolf Hitler.

DR. HORN: What was the result of this talk?

VON RIBBENTROP: I was present at that conversation. The result was that Adolf Hitler informed Beck, once more in detail, of his desire for good German-Polish relations. He said that a completely new solution would have to be found in regard to Danzig, and that a corridor to East Prussia should not give rise to insurmountable difficulties. During this conversation Mr. Beck was rather receptive. He told the Fuehrer that naturally the question of Danzig was difficult because of the mouth of the Vistula, but he would think the problem over in all its details. He did not at all refuse to discuss this problem, but rather he pointed out the difficulties which, due to the Polish attitude, confronted a solution of the problem.

DR. HORN: Is it true that Beck was, as a matter of principle, willing to negotiate and therefore invited you, at the end of January, to make a visit to Warsaw?

VON RIBBENTROP: One cannot put it quite that way. After the meeting at Berchtesgaden with the Fuehrer, I had another lengthy conversation with Beck in Munich. During this conversation Beck explained to me again that the problem was very difficult, but that he would do everything he could; he would speak to his governmental colleagues, and one would have to find a solution of some kind. On this occasion we agreed that I would pay him a return visit in Warsaw. During this visit we also spoke about the minority question, about Danzig and the Corridor. During this conversation the matter did not progress either; Mr. Beck rather repeated the arguments why it was difficult. I told him that it was simply impossible to leave this problem, the way it was between Germany and Poland. I pointed out the great difficulties encountered by the German minorities and the undignified situation, as I should like to put it, that is, the always undignified difficulties confronting Germans who wanted to travel to East Prussia. Beck promised to help in the minority question, and also to re-examine the other questions. Then, on the following day, I spoke briefly with Marshal Smygly-Rydz, but this conversation did not lead to anything.

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DR. HORN: At that time did you ask Beck to pay another visit to Berlin, and did this visit take place, or did Beck decide on a different course?

VON RIBBENTROP: What happened was that I invited Foreign Minister Beck to Berlin, because his first visit was not an official one. Unfortunately, however, Beck did not come to Berlin, but, as I have already said, he went to London.

DR. HORN: What was the effect of his visit to London on the subsequent negotiations?

VON RIBBENTROP: The effect of this London visit was a complete surprise to us. Minister Lipski, I believe it was on 21 March, yes, it was, suddenly handed us a memorandum.

DR. HORN: Let me interrupt you. On 21 March you had previously another conversation with Lipski regarding the partition of Czechoslovakia and the problems arising from the establishment of the Protectorate?

VON RIBBENTROP: That may be true, in that case I meant 26.

DR. HORN: Yes.

VON RIBBENTROP: That is right; on the 21st I had a talk with Lipski, that is true, and in this talk Lipski expressed certain doubts concerning Slovakia and the protection afforded by Germany. He expressed the wish that between Hungary and Poland, two countries which had always had close relations with each other, a direct, common boundary might be established and asked whether or not this would be possible. He also inquired indirectly whether the protection afforded to Slovakia was directed in any way against Poland. I assured Mr. Beck that neither Hitler nor anybody else had been motivated by the slightest intention of acting against Poland when the protection was promised. It was merely a measure to point out to Hungary that the territorial questions were now settled. However, I believe I told Mr. Lipski to look forward to such a link being established via the Carpatho-Ukraine.

DR. HORN: Is it true that consultations were initiated between Poland and the British Government, the French Government and the Russian Government about 20 March?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is right. These consultations, as far as I recall, go back to a suggestion made by Lord Simon. A common declaration was to be made with regard to Poland. But Poland did not regard this as satisfactory, and made it clear in London that this solution was out of the question for Poland.

DR. HORN: Is it true that Poland worked toward a concrete alliance with England and France?

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VON RIBBENTROP: There can be no doubt, and it is a historical fact that Poland strove for an alliance with England.

DR. HORN: When did the German Government find out that Poland had been promised support by England and France?

VON RIBBENTROP: That became known, I cannot tell you the date precisely, but it was, at any rate, during the latter part of March. Anyway, I know, and we all were convinced of what, I believe, is an established fact today, that these relations taken up during the latter part of March between Warsaw and London determined the answer which was, to our surprise, communicated to us by memorandum on 26 March, I believe.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that this memorandum stated that a further pursuit of German aims regarding a change in the Danzig and Corridor questions would mean war as far as Poland was concerned?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is correct. That was a great surprise to us. I know that I read the memorandum, and for a moment I simply could not believe that such an answer had been given, when one considers that for months we had tried to find a solution, which -- and I wish to emphasize this -- only Adolf Hitler, at that time, with his great authority over the German people could bring about and be responsible for.

I do not want to get lost in details, but I do want to say that the Danzig and Corridor problem, since 1919, had been considered by statesman of great authority the problem with which somehow the revision of Versailles would have to start. I should like to remind you of the statement by Marshal Foch and other statements by Winston Churchill, who also elaborated on this subject, as well as by Clemenceau, *et cetera*. All these statesmen were undoubtedly of the opinion that a territorial revision of this Corridor would really have to be undertaken. But Hitler, for his part, wanted to make it an over-all settlement and reach an understanding with Poland on the basis of his putting up with the Corridor and taking only Danzig back into the Reich, whereby Poland was to be afforded a very generous solution in the economic field. That, in other words, was the basis of the proposals which I had been working on for 4 to 5 months on Hitler's order. All the greater was our surprise when, suddenly, the other side declared that a further pursuit of these plans and solutions, which we regarded as very generous, would mean war. I informed Hitler of this, and I remember very well that Hitler received it very calmly.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that on the following day you stated to the Polish Ambassador that the memorandum of 26 March 1939 could not serve as the basis for a solution?

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VON RIBBENTROP: That is true. I just said that Hitler received this harsh and serious message of the Polish Ambassador very calmly. He said, however, that I should tell the Polish Ambassador that of course no solution could be found on this basis. There should be no talk of war.

DR. HORN: Is it true that thereupon, on 6 April 1939, the Polish Foreign Minister Beck traveled to London and returned with a temporary agreement of mutual assistance between Poland, England, and France?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is correct.

DR. HORN: What was the German reaction to this pact of mutual assistance?

VON RIBBENTROP: The German reaction here I might refer to Hitler's Reichstag speech in which he stated his attitude toward this whole problem. We felt this pact of mutual assistance between Poland and England to be not in agreement with the German-Polish pact of 1934, for in the 1934 pact any application of force was excluded between Germany and Poland. By the new pact concluded between Poland and England without previous consultation with Germany, Poland had bound herself for example, to attack Germany in case of any conflict between Germany and England. I know that Adolf Hitler felt that it was also not in conformity with the agreements between him and Mr. Chamberlain in

Munich, namely, the elimination of any resort to force between Germany and England, regardless of what might happen.

DR. HORN: Is it true that Germany then sent through you a memorandum to Poland on 28 April by which the German-Polish declaration of 1934 was rescinded?

VON RIBBENTROP: That is true. It was, I believe, on the same day as the Reichstag speech of the Fuehrer. This memorandum stated more or less what I have just summarized here, that the pact was not in agreement with the treaty of 1934 and that Germany regarded this treaty as no longer valid.

DR. HORN: Is it true that as a consequence of this memorandum German-Polish relations became more tense and that new difficulties arose in the minority question?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is true. During the preceding period negotiations had been pending in order to put the minority problem on a new basis. I still remember that no progress was made. That was already the case before 28 May, and after 28 May the situation of the German minority became even more difficult. In particular the Polish association for the Western Territories was very active at that time and persecution of Germans and their expulsion from hearth and home was the order of the day. I know

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that just during the months following 28 May, that is to say, in the summer of 1939, the so-called refugee reception camps for German refugees from Poland showed a tremendous influx.

DR. HORN: How did you and Hitler react to the British-French declarations of guarantee to Romania and Greece, and later on Turkey?

VON RIBBENTROP: These declarations could be interpreted by the German policy only as meaning that England was initiating a systematic policy of alliances in Europe which was hostile to Germany. That was Hitler's opinion and also mine.

DR. HORN: Is it true that these declarations of guarantee and Roosevelt's message of 14 April 1939 were then, on 22 May 1939, followed by the German-Italian pact of alliance? And what were the reasons for this pact?

VON RIBBENTROP: It is known that between Germany and Italy friendly relations had naturally existed for a long time; and when the European situation became more acute these relations were, at Mussolini's suggestion, intensified and a pact of alliance, which was discussed first by Count Ciano and me in Milan, was drawn up and provisionally signed on the order of the Government heads. This was an answer to the efforts of English-French policy.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that the crisis with Poland became acute through the fact that on 6 August in Danzig a dispute with the customs inspectors took place by which Germany was forced to take a stand?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is so. A quarrel had arisen between the Polish representative and the Senate of the City of Danzig. The Polish representative had sent a note to the President of the Senate informing him that certain customs officers of the Senate wanted to disobey Polish regulations. This information proved later to be false, was answered by the Senate, and led to a sharp exchange of notes between the Senate and the Polish representative. On Hitler's order I told the State Secretary of the Foreign Office to lodge appropriate protests with the Polish Government.

DR. HORN: Is it true that Weizsacker, the then State Secretary, on 15 August called the English and French Ambassadors in order to inform both these ambassadors in detail of the seriousness of the situation?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is true. He did that on my order.

DR. HORN: On 18 August was Ambassador Henderson again asked to see your State Secretary because the situation was becoming more acute in Poland and Danzig?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes. A conversation took place a few days later between the English Ambassador and the State Secretary. The

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State Secretary explained to him in very clear words the great seriousness of the situation and told him that things were taking a very serious turn.

DR. HORN: Is it true that in this phase of the crisis you made up your mind, on the basis of a suggestion made to you, to initiate negotiations with Russia, and what were your reasons for doing that?

VON RIBBENTROP: Negotiations with Russia had already started sometime previously. Marshal Stalin, in March 1939, delivered a speech in which he made certain hints of his desire to have better relations with Germany. I had submitted this speech to Adolf Hitler and asked him whether we should not try to find out whether this suggestion had something real behind it. Hitler was at first reluctant, but later on he became more receptive to this idea. Negotiations for a commercial treaty were under way, and during these negotiations, with the Fuehrer's permission, I took soundings in Moscow as to the possibility of a definite bridge between National Socialism and Bolshevism and whether the interests of the two countries could not at least be made to harmonize.

DR. HORN: How did the relations taken up by the Soviet Russian commercial agency in Berlin with your Minister Schnurre develop?

VON RIBBENTROP: The negotiations of Minister Schnurre gave me within a relatively short period of time a picture from which I could gather that Stalin had meant this speech in earnest. Then an exchange of telegrams took place with Moscow which, in the middle of August, led to Hitler's sending a telegram to Stalin, whereupon Stalin in answer to this telegram invited a plenipotentiary to Moscow. The aim in view, which had been prepared diplomatically, was the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between the two countries.

DR. HORN: Is it true that you were sent to Moscow as plenipotentiary?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is known.

DR. HORN: When did you fly to Moscow, and what negotiations did you carry on there?

VON RIBBENTROP: On the evening of 22 August I arrived in Moscow. The reception given me by Stalin and Molotov was very friendly. We had at first a 2-hour conversation. During this conversation the entire complex of Russo-German relations was discussed. The result was, first, the mutual will of both countries to put their relations on a completely new basis. This was to be expressed in a pact of non-aggression. Secondly, the spheres of interests of the two countries were to be defined; this was done by a secret supplementary protocol.

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DR. HORN: Which cases were dealt with in this secret supplementary protocol? What were its contents and what the political bases?

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to say, first of all, that this secret protocol has been spoken about several times here in this Court. I talked very frankly during the negotiations with Stalin and Molotov, and the Russian gentlemen also used plain language with me. I described Hitler's desire that the two countries should reach a definitive agreement, and, of course, I also spoke of the critical situation in Europe. I told the Russian gentlemen that Germany would do everything to settle the situation in Poland and to settle the difficulties peacefully in order to reach a friendly agreement despite everything.

However, I left no doubt that the situation was serious and that it was possible that an armed conflict might break out. That was clear anyway. For both statesmen, Stalin as well as Hitler, it was a question of territories which both countries had lost after an unfortunate war. It is, therefore, wrong to look at these things from any other point of view. And just as Adolf Hitler was of the opinion which I expressed in Moscow, that in some form or other this problem would have to be solved, so also the Russian side saw clearly that this was the case.

We then discussed what should be done on the part of the Germans and on the part of the Russians in the case of an armed conflict. A line of demarcation was agreed upon, as is known, in order that in the event of intolerable Polish provocation, or in the event of war, there should be a boundary, so that the German and Russian interests in the Polish theater could and would not collide. The well-known line was agreed upon along the line of the Rivers Vistula, San, and Bug in Polish territory. And it was agreed that in the case of conflict the territories lying to the west of these rivers would be the German sphere of interest, and those to the east would be the Russian sphere of interest.

It is known that later, after the outbreak of the war, these zones were occupied on the one side by Germany and on the other side by Russian troops. I may repeat that at that time I had the impression, both from Hitler and Stalin, that the territories -- that these Polish territories and also the other territories which had been marked off in these spheres of interest, about which I shall speak shortly --

that these were territories which both countries had lost after an unfortunate war. And both statesmen undoubtedly held the opinion that if these territories -- if, I should like to say, the last chance for a reasonable solution of this problem was exhausted -- there was certainly a justification for Adolf Hitler to incorporate these territories into the German Reich by some other procedure.

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Over and above that, it is also known that other spheres of interest were defined with reference to Finland, the Baltic States, and Bessarabia. This was a great settlement of the interest of two great powers providing for a peaceful solution as well as for solution by war.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that these negotiations were drawn up specifically only in the event that, on the basis of the non-aggression pact and the political settlement between Russia and Germany, it might not be possible to settle the Polish question diplomatically?

VON RIBBENTROP: Please repeat the question.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that it was clearly stated that this solution was designed only to provide for the event that, despite the Pact of Non-aggression with Russia, the Polish conflict might not be solved by diplomatic means and that the treaty was to become effective only in this case?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is so. I stated at that time that on the German side everything would be attempted to solve the problem in a diplomatic and peaceful way.

DR. HORN: Did Russia promise you diplomatic assistance or benevolent neutrality in connection with this solution?

VON RIBBENTROP: It could be seen from the Pact of Nonaggression and from all the conferences in Moscow that this was so. It was perfectly clear, and we were convinced of it, that if, due to the Polish attitude, a war broke out, Russia would assume a friendly attitude towards us.

DR. HORN: When did you fly back from Moscow, and what sort of situation did you find in Berlin?

VON RIBBENTROP: The Pact of Non-aggression with the Soviet Union was concluded on the 23rd. On the 24th I flew back to Germany. I had thought at first that I would fly to the Fuehrer, to the Berghof in Berchtesgaden, but during the flight or prior to it -- I do not know exactly -- I was asked to come to Berlin.

We flew to Berlin, and there I informed Hitler of the Moscow agreements. The situation which I found there was undoubtedly very tense. On the next day I noticed this particularly.

DR. HORN: To what circumstances was this aggravation of the German-Polish situation to be attributed?

VON RIBBENTROP: In the middle of August all sorts of things had happened which, as I should like to put it, charged the atmosphere with electricity: frontier incidents, difficulties between Danzig and

Poland. On the one hand, Germany was accused of sending arms to Danzig, and, on the other hand, we accused the Poles of taking military measures in Danzig, and so on.

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DR. HORN: Is it true that on your return from Moscow to Berlin, you were informed of the signing of the British-Polish Pact of Guarantee and what was your reaction and that of Hitler to this?

VON RIBBENTROP: That was on 25 August. On 25 August I was informed about the conversation which the Fuehrer had had with Ambassador Henderson during my absence from Germany, I believe at Berchtesgaden on 22 August. This was a very serious conversation. Henderson had brought over a letter from the British Prime Minister which stated clearly that a war between Germany and Poland would draw England into the picture.

Then, early on the 25th I -- the Fuehrer then answered this letter, I believe on the same day -- and the answer was couched so as to mean that at the moment a solution by diplomatic means could not be expected. I discussed with the Fuehrer on the 25th this exchange of letters and asked him to consider this question once more and suggested that one more attempt might be made with reference to England. This was 25 August, a very eventful day. In the morning a communication came from the Italian Government, according to which Italy, in the case of a conflict over Poland, would not stand at Germany's side. The Fuehrer decided then to receive Ambassador Henderson once more in the course of that day. This meeting took place at about noon of the 25th. I was present. The Fuehrer went into details and asked Henderson once more to bear in mind his urgent desire to reach an understanding with England. He described to him the very difficult situation with Poland and asked him, I believe, to take a plane and fly back to England in order to discuss this whole situation once more with the British Government. Ambassador Henderson agreed to this and I sent him, I believe in the course of the afternoon, a memo or a *note verbale* in which the Fuehrer put in writing his ideas for such an understanding, or rather what he had said during the meeting, so that the ambassador would be able to inform his government correctly.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that after the British-Polish Pact of Guarantee became known, you asked Hitler to stop the military measures which had been started in Germany?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is so. I was just about to relate that. During the course of the afternoon -- I heard in the course of the day that certain military measures were being taken and then in the afternoon I received, I believe, a Reuters dispatch, at any rate it was a press dispatch -- saying that the Polish-British Pact of Alliance had been ratified in London.

I believe there was even a note appended that the Polish Ambassador Raczynski had been sick but had nevertheless suddenly given his signature in the Foreign Office.

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DR. HORN: Was this treaty signed before or after it was known that Italy refused to sign the Italian mobilization?

VON RIBBENTROP: This treaty was undoubtedly concluded afterwards. Of course, I do not know the hour and the day, but I believe it must have been on the afternoon of 25 August, and Italy's refusal had already reached us by noon; I believe in other words, it had undoubtedly been definitively decided in Rome in the morning or on the day before. At any rate, I can deduce this from another fact. Perhaps I might, however, answer your other question first, namely, what I did upon receipt of this news.

DR. HORN: Yes.

VON RIBBENTROP: When I received this press dispatch, of which I was informed once more when I came to the Chancellery, I went immediately to Hitler and asked him to stop at once the military measures, whatever they were -- I was not familiar with military matters in detail -- and I told him that it was perfectly clear that this meant war with England and that England could never disavow her signature. The Fuehrer reflected only a short while and then he said that was true and immediately called his military adjutant, and I believe it was Field Marshal Keitel who came, in order to call together the generals and stop the military measures which had been started. On this occasion he made a remark that we had received two pieces of bad news on one day. That was Italy and this news, and I thought it was possible that the report about Italy's attitude had become known in London immediately, whereupon the final ratification of this pact had taken place. I still remember this remark of the Fuehrer's very distinctly.

DR. HORN: Did you and Hitler, on this day, make efforts with Henderson to settle the conflict, and what were your proposals?

VON RIBBENTROP: I have already stated that the Fuehrer, I believe it was in the early afternoon, saw Henderson on the 25th and told him that he still had the intention of reaching some final understanding with England. The question of Danzig and the Corridor would have to be solved in some way and he wanted to approach England with a comprehensive offer which was not contained in the *note verbale*, in order to settle these things with England on a perfectly regular basis.

DR. HORN: Is it true that Hitler then put an airplane at Henderson's disposal so that the latter could submit these proposals to his government at once and request his government to make their promised mediation effective in regard to Poland?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is true. I know that Henderson -- I believe it was on the next day, the 26th -- flew to London in a German airplane. I do not know the details, but I know that the

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Fuehrer said during the meeting, "Take an airplane immediately and fly to your government."

DR. HORN: What results did Ambassador Henderson bring back to Berlin on 28 August?

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to say in this connection, that in view of the critical situation between Poland and Germany, which, of course, was also known to the British Ambassador, Hitler expressed to me a certain disappointment that the British Ambassador had not returned more quickly with his answer, for the atmosphere was charged with electricity on that day. On the 28th, Henderson then had another discussion with the Fuehrer. I was also present. The answer brought back by Sir Nevile Henderson from London appeared at first not very satisfactory to the Fuehrer. It contained various points which seemed unclear to the Fuehrer. But the main point was that England announced her readiness for a wholesale solution of the existing problems between Germany and England, on the condition that the German-Polish question could be brought to a peaceful solution.

In the discussion Adolf Hitler told Sir Nevile Henderson that he would examine the note and would then ask him to come back. Then he ...

DR. HORN: Is it true that in this memorandum England suggested that Germany take up direct negotiations with Poland?

VON RIBBENTROP: That is true. One of the points in the note -- I intended to go into that -- was that the English suggested that German-Polish direct negotiations would be the most appropriate way to reach a solution and, secondly, that such negotiations should take place as soon as possible, because England had to admit that the situation was very tense because of the frontier incidents and in every respect. Furthermore the note stated that no matter what solution might be found -- I believe this was in the note -- it should be guaranteed by the great powers.

DR. HORN: Did England offer a mediator to forward to Poland German proposals for direct negotiations?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is right.

DR. HORN: What were these German proposals like, which on 29 August 1939, were given by Hitler to Henderson in answer to Henderson's memorandum?

VON RIBBENTROP: The situation was this: On the 29th Adolf Hitler again received the British Ambassador and on this occasion told him that he was ready to take up the English suggestion of the 28th, that is to say, that despite the great tension and despite the Polish attitude, which he resented so profoundly, he was prepared to

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offer his hand once more for a peaceful solution of the German-Polish problems, as suggested in the British note of the 28th.

DR. HORN: What were the reasons for including in this German proposal a request that a Polish plenipotentiary be sent by 30 August?

VON RIBBENTROP: In Adolf Hitler's communication to Ambassador Henderson for the British Government it was stated that the German Government, in view of the tense situation, would immediately set about working out proposals for a solution of the Danzig and Corridor problems. The German Government hoped to be in a position to have these proposals available by the time a Polish negotiator arrived who was expected during the course of 30 August.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that Hitler included this condition or this request to send a plenipotentiary within 24 hours because he was afraid that a conflict might arise due to the fact that the mobilized armies of the two countries faced each other?

VON RIBBENTROP: That is absolutely true. I might say that during the meeting on the 29th Ambassador Henderson, as I recall, asked the Fuehrer whether this was an ultimatum. The Fuehrer answered "No," that that was not an ultimatum, but rather, I believe he said, a practical proposal or a proposal arising from the situation, or something of that sort. I should like to repeat that it was a fact that the situation near the frontiers of Danzig and the Corridor during the last days of August looked, one might say, as if the guns would go off on their own unless something was done rather soon. That was the reason for the relatively short respite which was made a condition by the Fuehrer. He feared that if more time were allowed, matters would drag out and danger of war not decrease but rather increase.

DR. HORN: Is it true that, despite this information given to Ambassador Henderson, the answer of the British Government called this proposal unreasonable?

VON RIBBENTROP: I know of the British reaction from several documents that I saw later. The first reaction came during my discussion with Henderson on 30 August.

DR. HORN: Is it true that on 30 August you received a confidential communication regarding Poland's total mobilization?

VON RIBBENTROP: That is true. On the 30th Hitler awaited word from the Polish negotiator. This, however, did not come, but, I believe, on the evening of the 30th the news arrived that Poland had ordered, although not announced, general mobilization. I believe it was not announced until the next morning. This, of course, further aggravated the situation enormously.

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DR. HORN: Is it true that the British Government then practically withdrew their offer to mediate by suggesting that Germany take immediate and direct steps to prepare negotiations between Germany and Poland?

VON RIBBENTROP: You mean on the 30th?

DR. HORN: Yes, on the 30th.

VON RIBBENTROP: That is so. As I said before, we had been waiting on the 30th, but the Polish negotiator had not arrived. In the meantime, Hitler had prepared the proposals which he wanted to hand to a Polish negotiator who, as he had expressly promised Sir Nevile Henderson, would be able to negotiate with Germany on the basis of complete equality. Not until shortly before midnight, or at least in the late evening, a call came through saying that the British Ambassador wanted to transmit a communication from his government. This meeting, I believe, was then postponed once more; at any rate at midnight on 30 August the well-known conversation between Henderson and me took place.

DR. HORN: You heard yesterday Minister Schmidt's description of this meeting. Do you have anything to add to his description of it?

VON RIBBENTROP: I should like to add the following about this conversation. It is perfectly clear that at that moment all of us were nervous, that is true. The British Ambassador was nervous and so was I. I should like to and must mention here the fact that the British Ambassador had had on the day before a minor scene with the Fuehrer which might have ended seriously. I succeeded in changing the subject. Therefore, there was also a certain tension between the British Ambassador and myself. However, I intentionally received the British Ambassador composedly and calmly, and accepted his communication. I hoped that this communication would, in the last moment, contain his announcement of a Polish negotiator.

However, this did not happen. Rather, Sir Nevile Henderson told me:

1. That his government could not recommend this mode of procedure, despite the tense situation, which had been aggravated still more by the Polish total mobilization; rather the British Government recommended that the German Government use diplomatic channels;
2. That, if the German Government would submit the same proposals to the British Government, the British Government would be ready to exert their influence in Warsaw in order to find a solution, as far as these suggestions appeared to be reasonable. In view of the whole situation this was a very difficult answer because, as I said, the situation was extremely tense and the Fuehrer had been waiting

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since the day before for a Polish emissary. I, in turn, feared also that the guns would go off by themselves unless a solution or something else came quickly, as I have said. I then read to Henderson the proposals given to me by the Fuehrer. I should like to state here once more under oath that the Fuehrer had expressly forbidden me to let these proposals out of my hands. He told me that I might communicate to the British Ambassador only the substance of them, if I thought it advisable. I did a little more than that; I read all the proposals, from the beginning to the end, to the British Ambassador. I did this because I still hoped that the British Government wanted to exert their influence in Warsaw and assist in a solution. But here too I must state frankly that from my talk with the British Ambassador on 30 August, from his whole attitude, which Minister Schmidt also described to a certain extent yesterday, as well as from the substance of the communication of the British Government, I got the

impression that England at this moment was not quite prepared to live up to the situation and, let us say, to do her utmost to bring about a peaceful solution.

DR. HORN: What did the German Government do after the contents of the note were made known to Ambassador Henderson?

VON RIBBENTROP: After my conversation with the British Ambassador I reported to the Fuehrer. I told him it had been a serious conversation. I told him also that in pursuance of his instructions I had not handed the memorandum to Sir Nevile Henderson despite the latter's request. But I had the impression that the situation was serious and I was convinced that the British guarantee to Poland was in force. That had been my very definite impression from this conversation. Then, in the course of the 31st the Fuehrer waited the whole day to see whether or not some sort of Polish negotiator would come or whether a new communication would come from the British Government. We have heard here about Reich Marshal Goering's intervention, how he informed Mr. Dahlerus of the contents of this note in every detail. There can thus be no doubt that during the course of that night, at the latest in the morning of the 31st the precise proposals of the Reich Government were in the hands of both the London Government and the Warsaw Government. On the 31st the Fuehrer waited the whole day and I am convinced, and I want to state it very clearly here, that he hoped that something would be done by England. Then in the course of the 31st the Polish Ambassador came to see me. But it is known that he had no authority to do anything, to enter into negotiations or even to receive proposals of any sort. I do not know whether the Fuehrer would have authorized me on the 31st to hand proposals of this sort to him, but I think it is possible. But the Polish Ambassador was not authorized to receive them, as he expressly told me.

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I might point out briefly that regarding the attitude in Warsaw the witness Dahlerus has already given additional testimony.

DR. HORN: It is correct that England did not forward the German proposals to Warsaw until the evening of 31 August?

VON RIBBENTROP: Please repeat the question.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that the German proposals which had been submitted by you on the preceding evening of the 30th to Ambassador Sir Nevile Henderson were not forwarded to Warsaw until the evening of 31 August?

VON RIBBENTROP: You mean from London?

DR. HORN: From London?

VON RIBBENTROP: That I cannot tell you precisely, but that can undoubtedly be verified from official documents.

DR. HORN: What considerations then led to the final decision to take military action against Poland?

VON RIBBENTROP: I cannot tell you the details of this. I know only that the Fuehrer -- that the proposals which I had read to the British Ambassador in the night of the 30th were published by broadcast, as I believe, on the evening of the 31st. The reaction of the Warsaw radio, I remember this reaction exactly, was unfortunately such as to sound like a veritable battlecry in answer to the German proposals which, as I heard, had been characterized by Henderson as reasonable. I believe they were characterized by the Polish radio as an insolence, and the Germans were spoken of as Huns or the like. I still remember that. At any rate, shortly after the announcement of these proposals a very sharp negative answer came from Warsaw. I assume that it was the answer which persuaded the Fuehrer in the night of the 31st to issue the order to march. I, for my part, can say only that I went to the Reich Chancellery, and the Fuehrer told me that he had given the order and that nothing else could be done now, or something to this effect, and that things were now in motion. Thereupon I said to the Fuehrer merely, "I wish you good luck."

I might also mention that the outbreak of these hostilities was the end of years of efforts on the part of Adolf Hitler to bring about friendship with England.

DR. HORN: Did Mussolini make another proposal of mediation and how did this proposal turn out?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is true. On 3 September, in the morning, such a proposal of mediation arrived in Berlin stating that Mussolini was still in a position to bring the Polish question in some way before the forum of a conference, and that he would do so if the German Government agreed rapidly. It was said at the same

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time that the French Government had already approved this proposal. Germany also immediately agreed. But a few days later -- I cannot now state the time precisely -- it was reported that, in a speech I believe, by the British Foreign Minister Halifax in the House of Commons or in some other British declaration, this proposal had been turned down by London.

DR. HORN: Do you know whether France also turned down this proposal?

VON RIBBENTROP: I have already said that we received along with the proposal, I believe through the Italian Government, the information that the French Government either was in favor of the suggestion or had already accepted it.

DR. HORN: Did you see any possibilities for peace after the conclusion of the Polish campaign and were they pursued?

VON RIBBENTROP: After the conclusion of the Polish campaign I had some lengthy conversations with Adolf Hitler. The situation was then such that beyond a doubt there was a certain lack of enthusiasm for this whole war on the part of the French. During these weeks military people occasionally used the expression "potato war in the West." Hitler, as far as I can judge from everything

that he told me, was not interested in bringing the war in the West to a decision, and I believe this was true of all of us members of the Government. I should like to remind you of the speech made by Reich Marshal Goering to this effect at that time. Hitler then made a speech in Danzig, and I believe later somewhere else, perhaps in the Reichstag, I believe in the Reichstag, in which he twice told England and France in unmistakable language that he was still ready to open negotiations at any time. We tried to find out also very cautiously by listening to diplomatic circles what the mood was in the enemy capitals. But the public replies to Adolf Hitler's speeches clearly demonstrated that there could be no thought of peace.

DR. HORN: What did you do from then on to prevent the war from becoming more extended?

VON RIBBENTROP: It was, I should like to say, my most ardent endeavor; after the end of the Polish campaign to attempt to localize the war, that is, to prevent the war from spreading in Europe. However, I soon was to find out that once a war has broken out, politics are not always the only or rather not at all, the decisive factor in such matters, and that in such cases the so-called timetables of general staffs start to function. Everybody wants to outdo everybody else. Our diplomatic efforts were undoubtedly everywhere, in Scandinavia as well as in the Balkans and elsewhere, against an extension of the war. Nevertheless, the war did take that course. I should like to state that according to my conversations with Adolf

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Hitler, and I am also convinced that the German military men were of the same opinion, Hitler wished in no way to extend the war anywhere.

DR. HORN: Is it correct that you received information which pointed to the intention of the Western Powers to invade the Ruhr?

VON RIBBENTROP: Yes, that is true. We received numerous reports all the time. Our intelligence service was such that we had a great many channels doing intelligence work. All of these channels led to the Fuehrer. The Foreign Office had relatively little intelligence service, but relied rather on official diplomatic channels. But we too received reports and news at that time which undoubtedly allowed inferences to be drawn. We in the Foreign Office also received reports implying that the Western Powers had the intention of advancing into the Ruhr area at the first appropriate opportunity. The situation in the West was such that the West Wall was a very strong military barrier against France and this naturally gave rise to the idea that such an attack might come through neutral territory, such as Belgium and Holland.

THE PRESIDENT: How much longer will you take, Dr. Horn?

DR. HORN: I believe an hour to an hour and a half, Your Lordship.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the Tribunal has listened with great patience to a very great deal of detail. All I can say is that this exaggerated going into detail does not do the defendant's case any good in my opinion. We will adjourn now.

[The Tribunal adjourned until 30 March 1946 at 1000 hours.]

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